

## **Edwards Re-introduces The Military Retirees' Healthcare Protection Act to Freeze TRICARE Premiums**

(Washington, DC)— U.S. Representative Chet Edwards (TX17) today re-introduced the Military Retirees' Healthcare Protection Act. If enacted Edwards' bill would prevent the Defense Department from increasing health care premiums for about 3 million enlisted and officer retirees under TRICARE, the military's health insurance system, and require the Administration to request future increases through Congress.

"I believe that keeping our promise of quality, affordable health care for military retirees is the right thing to do and the smart thing to do. It is right because our nation has a moral obligation to keep our promises to those who have kept their promise to defend our nation. It is the smart thing to do because we cannot attract the best and brightest to fight our war on terrorism in the years ahead if they see us breaking faith with those who served in years past. To win the war on terrorism, we must keep faith with our warriors," said Edwards, Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs.

In 2006, the Bush Administration's budget proposal included, for the first time, a provision to double premiums for senior enlisted and triple them for officers, but the final 2007 Defense Authorization bill delayed the increases for one year. For fiscal years 2008 and 2009, the Administration's proposed increases were blocked again by Congress, but no permanent fix was put in place. "I hope the new Administration will not request the same premium increases as the last, but this legislation will allow us to remove any temptation," said Edwards.

Numerous organizations representing military retirees support Edwards' bill, which had 215 cosponsors during the 110th Congress, and is currently cosponsored by Republican Representative Walter Jones (NC03). "I would like to thank Congressman Walter Jones for his leadership on this important issue," said Edwards. "We believe the Constitution purposely gave the Congress the power to declare war and to pass appropriations bills, so we think it is reasonable that Congress has a say in approving appropriations for health care programs for those who fight our wars."

Edwards represents District 17 in Texas and is Chairman of the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee.